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Summary record of the 3rd meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 3 October 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. Effah-Apenteng ..... (Ghana)
Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions: Mr. Mselle

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Organization of work (A/56/250; A/C.5/56/1; A/C.5/56/L.1)

1. **The Chairman** invited the Committee to consider the programme of work for the main part of the current session, as set forth in the unofficial document submitted by the Bureau. He drew attention to document A/C.5/56/1, which listed the agenda items allocated to the Committee by the General Assembly, and to document A/C.5/56/L.1, which listed the related documentation.

2. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Committee's programme of work should reflect a balanced allocation of time and give priority to subjects that had to be considered within a fixed timescale. The Committee's programme of work should be reviewed on a weekly basis and, when time for consideration of the items was allocated, priority should be given to those items on which decisions had to be taken during the main part of the session. In particular, the Secretariat should abide by the six-week rule for the submission of documentation in order to give all delegations sufficient time to consider it prior to the discussions in the Committee. The late submission of documentation affected all delegations and impeded the work of the Committees. For that reason, it was important to comply with the relevant provisions of resolution 54/248 and of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly. Furthermore, all the reports requested in General Assembly resolution 55/258 on human resources management should be submitted at the current session. Moreover, informal consultations should be transparent, no simultaneous consultations or meetings should be held, and all meetings should be announced sufficiently in advance.

3. The programme of work included complex subjects on which the Group of 77 and China was ready to hold consultations and negotiations with other delegations in the traditional spirit of cooperation and mutual understanding so as to enable the current session to be brought to a successful conclusion within the specified time limit.

4. **Mr. Tilemans** (Belgium), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the Central and Eastern European countries associated with the European Union (Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), the associated countries Cyprus, Malta and Turkey and the European Free Trade Association countries members of the European Economic Area (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway), said that the adoption of the Organization's budget for the biennium 2002-2003 would enable the United Nations to pursue the aim of becoming a modern and efficient organization. The European Union would try to seek a consensus on all the items on the Committee's agenda, in particular on the narrative part of the section on human rights. The Union welcomed the fact that the largest contributor to the United Nations had decided to pay part of its arrears; a settlement of that matter would strengthen the financial situation of the United Nations and facilitate the work of the Committee. The Union would support the strengthening of measures designed to ensure the payment by Member States of their assessments on time, in full and without conditions.

5. The European Union attached importance to the timely submission of documents concerning proposals for strengthening staff security, the draft budgets of the international criminal tribunals and the financial impact on the programme budget for the biennium 2000-2001 of draft resolution A/C.4/55/L.23 on the comprehensive review of the whole question of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects.

6. The European Union was satisfied with the Committee's programme of work, as proposed by the Secretariat, in that it allowed sufficient time for discussion of the most important matters which the Committee would have to consider in the main part of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly. In that connection, the European Union recalled the relevant rules of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the Assembly's decisions on the organization of its fifty-sixth session and the recommendations of the Committee on Conferences on limiting the duration of meetings. Although time was required to enable the Member States to adopt fully informed decisions by consensus, there was no reason why the measure to limit the duration of meetings, if adopted, should be an obstacle to reaching consensus. It would lighten the Secretariat's workload, facilitate the planning of meetings and release financial resources. It was also necessary for small and medium-sized delegations which had too few members to attend all meetings. The optimum utilization of time depended primarily on the Member States showing greater

discipline. For that reason, the European Union would keep its statements in the general debate to the minimum and, whenever possible, would submit its questions in writing to the coordinators of the informal consultations on the proposals, reports and documents on which the Committee's decisions were to be based. Finally, the European Union would like to see the coordinators play a more proactive role in leading the informal consultations, limiting the length of statements and preparing draft resolutions.

7. **The Chairman** said that it was his understanding that the Committee wished to adopt the programme of work contained in the informal paper submitted by the Bureau, on the understanding that the necessary changes would be made in the course of the session.

It was so decided.

8. **The Chairman** suggested that the Committee should take note of the recommendations made by the General Assembly in document A/56/250 on the organization of the work of the General Assembly and the Main Committees.

It was so decided.

9. **The Chairman** said that, in view of the Fifth Committee's heavy programme of work and in order to make the most efficient use of the time allotted, the Bureau proposed that a time limit of seven minutes should be set for delegations' statements and a time limit of 15 minutes for the spokesmen for groups of delegations participating in the general debate. The seven-minute limit could also apply to the introduction of reports by members of the Secretariat. In addition, the Bureau recommended that statements in the informal consultations should be as brief as possible.

10. **Mr. Nakkari** (Syrian Arab Republic) said that it was difficult to ask delegations to limit their statements to seven minutes and even more difficult to ask the Secretariat to promise to respect that limit in introducing its reports. He therefore hoped that the Chairman's suggestion would be the expression of a wish and not a requirement from the Secretariat. In addition, it was necessary to guarantee interpretation in all the languages and to circulate draft resolutions in all the official languages at least 24 hours before decisions were to be taken on them.

11. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that delegations should be aware of the time limit proposed but agreed with the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic that it could create difficulties. He hoped that the Bureau would be able to find a solution to that problem. With respect to the programme for the period from 12 to 16 November, the Bureau should clarify whether any meeting could be postponed or brought forward, since the work programme was very heavy for five working days.

12. **The Chairman** said that he would take into account the question raised by the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic but that the Committee should strike a balance between flexibility and efficiency and should conclude its work on time. With respect to the question raised by the representative of India, the Bureau would submit proposals to the Committee in due course.

13. The Bureau had also considered several ways of facilitating the Committee's work, particularly during the informal consultations, and had recommended that the coordinators for agenda items should prepare draft resolutions for consideration by the Committee during the first set of informal consultations. The texts prepared could be circulated to members of the Committee so that they could consider them immediately after the conclusion of the part of the meeting devoted to questions and answers. Delegations could then submit amendments. In the opinion of the Bureau, that method would facilitate the adoption of resolutions on specific questions.

14. **Mr. Elgammal** (Egypt) said that the periods devoted to questions and answers could extend over several meetings. He therefore asked the Chairman to clarify his suggestion.

15. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that comments were made during the informal consultations which facilitated the preparation of draft resolutions on specific items and that, if those comments could not be clearly made because of a time limit on statements, it was unlikely that the texts prepared would correctly reflect the positions of delegations.

16. **Mr. Chandra** (India) said that one or two sets of consultations would be sufficient to enable the item coordinators to see how the discussions were progressing. The coordinators could then prepare texts on the basis of the opinions expressed. The Secretariat could consider the question in greater detail. If items required more than two sets of informal consultations, during the third set the coordinator could try to

introduce the relevant text, as had already been done on other occasions.

17. **The Chairman** agreed that statements on certain items, such as the budget of the Organization, could not be limited to the time proposed. However, the Committee must make the best possible use of the time at its disposal and delegations should bear in mind the need to save time. The Bureau would keep the question under review.

18. **Mr. Tilemans** (Belgium) asked whether there would be a time limit on statements during the informal consultations.

19. **Mr. Mirmohammad** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that inscription on the list of speakers would depend on timely submission of documentation and asked the Bureau to take the question into consideration.

20. **The Chairman** said that the Bureau would reply in due course to the question of the representative of Belgium and would take into account the question raised by the representative of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

The meeting rose at 3.50 p.m.